



Making The Most of Your Remaining Vision

Tips and Resources for People with Vision Loss

Vision Rehabilitation: Learning New Ways to Do Things

Vision loss can make it hard to do your everyday tasks, such as reading, using your cell phone or computer, cooking, or going out with friends. Luckily there are many new tools and devices that help people with low vision. For example, cell phone cameras can make things appear larger. Smartphones can help identify objects and colors or “read” barcodes for you. You can learn tips for managing lighting, improving contrast, and adapting to new ways to do your activities.

Losing vision does not mean giving up your activities. Instead, you can learn new ways to do them.

Coping With The Experience of Vision Loss

It is normal to feel angry and frustrated about your vision loss. The key to avoiding depression and staying active is getting help.

Talk with a counselor and join a good support group for people with vision loss. These are two important ways to work through your feelings and learn new ways to cope with vision loss. Another important step is to learn new ways to do your daily activities through vision rehabilitation.

Remember: your value to yourself and others has nothing to do with your vision. You are worth the effort it takes to learn how to make the most of your remaining sight.

A Message for Your Family and Friends

If your friend or family member has low vision, you can play a vital role in helping them adapt successfully. Recognize the challenge of vision loss and offer help, but don't take over their tasks. Help them take the steps to accomplish these tasks on their own. Your goal is to help them become more independent.

To locate low vision services near you, visit www.visionaware.org

Patterns of Vision and Vision Loss

Central vision is the detailed vision we have when looking directly at something. Macular degeneration affects your central vision, and so can diabetic retinopathy.

Peripheral vision is the less detailed vision we have when we are not looking directly at something. Some people call it “side vision.” Glaucoma and retinitis pigmentosa are two conditions that affect your peripheral vision first. Having a stroke can affect one side of your peripheral vision. Diabetic retinopathy can also lead to peripheral vision loss.

Monocular vision is when one eye has much less vision than the other eye. This can affect your depth perception, or your ability to judge how near or far something is from you.

Some people with vision loss may see life-like images (such as people or animals) that they know are not real. This is called **Charles Bonnet Syndrome**. Having this condition does not mean you have something wrong with your mind. It is just a part of vision loss for some people.

Tips for Making the Most of Remaining Vision

There are a number of ways to see better with your remaining vision. A vision rehabilitation specialist can teach you how to adapt things around your home and new ways to do things.

Use Your “Next-Best Spot” To See

When a blind spot (called a scotoma) blocks the center of your vision, you can use the “next-best spot” in your vision to see. This spot is called the Preferred Retinal Locus or PRL. A vision rehabilitation specialist can help you to learn how to use your PRL.

Make Things Brighter

Improve lighting: Use a gooseneck lamp. Carry a pocket flashlight or use your cell phone’s flashlight.

Reduce Glare: Cover shiny counters with a cloth or something that does not reflect light. Try yellow, amber, yellow or plum-tinted glasses or clip-on sunglasses. Visors are useful in cutting down the glare indoors or outdoors.

Increase contrast: Use a thick black pen (like a permanent marker), not a ballpoint pen. Draw a thick dark line on a paper where you need to sign. Use a white cup for dark liquids like coffee or black tea, and pour milk into a dark cup. Use a tablecloth or placemat that is much lighter or darker than your plates.

Make Things Bigger

Move closer: Sit close to the TV and up front at performances.

Enlarge: Get large print checks, playing cards, bingo cards, crosswords, calendars and books. You can also find large screen or large button phones, TV remotes, and keyboards.

Magnify: Get an e-reader or electronic tablet for books. Use a lighted, handheld magnifier for price tags and menus. Try a stand magnifier or video magnifier for reading text.

Label: Mark thermostats and dials with paint that has texture (at a fabric store). Label medications with bright markers or colored rubber bands. Try putting safety pins the labels of similar-colored clothing so they are easier to match.

Organize: Put things in a specific spot so you can always find them. Get rid of clutter.

Substitute: Let's Hear it For Your Ears

Listen to books and magazines in audio format. Get a talking watch, calculator or blood sugar meter. Use audio screen readers to listen to your computer or cell phone texts. (See Resources List below.)

Participate

Staying home to avoid asking people for help is not being independent. You will probably find that your friends are happy to help if you ask them. Keep your social group, volunteer job, golf games or bowling activity. You might need to adapt by using large print or a magnifier, or you may need a ride or someone to spot your ball. Ask for the help you need.

Driving and Other Transportation

If you drive, choose your drive times and routes carefully. Use your GPS navigation device's talking option. If driving is difficult, cars appear unexpectedly, drivers honk at you or you are having fender-benders, do

not drive. Take a taxi, buy gas for a friend who drives or hire a part-time driver. Try a 3-wheel bike or electric scooter. Walk when you can.

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Resources for Low Vision

Low Vision in Children

American Academy of Pediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus (AAPOS)
Resources for low vision and cerebral/cortical visual impairment:
<https://aapos.org/education/educational-resources/pediatric-low-vision-education>

More information about childhood eye conditions:
<https://aapos.org/patients/eye-terms>

Lions Club: Videos and webcasts about low vision conditions and rehabilitation <http://kanlovkids.kssdb.org/training>

Audio Books and Magazines

National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS)
888-657-7323. Books and player provided free <http://www.loc.gov/nls/>

Bookshare accessible online library: \$50 annually; free for students. Read on your computer, tablet, smart phone or assistive device.
<http://www.bookshare.org/>

Choice Magazine Listening (quarterly issues of recorded magazine selections, unabridged) 888-724-6423
<http://www.choicemagazinelistening.org/>

Audio Bibles for the Blind
<https://www.auroraministries.org/pages/audio-bibles>

NFB-NEWSLINE® <https://www.nfb.org/programs-services/nfb-newsline>

Large Print Materials and Visual Devices

American Printing House for the Blind
<https://www.aph.org/shop/>

Learning Sight & Sound (LS&S)

<https://www.lssproducts.com/> 800-468-4789

MaxiAids <http://www.maxiaids.com/> 800-522-6294

Independent Living Aids <http://www.independentliving.com/> 800-537-2118

New York Times Large Print Weekly

<https://homedelivery.nytimes.com/HDS/LargeTypeWeeklyHome.do?mode=ChooseCountry.LargeTypeWeekly> 800-631-2580

Technologies: Computers, Cell Phones, Video Magnifiers

Search “voice to text software”

Apple and Mac devices

Apple accessibility information

<http://www.apple.com/accessibility> 877-204-3930

AppleVis user community <http://www.applevis.com/>

Facebook accessibility

Help page <https://www.facebook.com/help/accessibility>

Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/accessibility>

Microsoft accessibility tutorials

<http://www.microsoft.com/enable/default.aspx> 800-936-5900

Accessible cellphones <http://www.accessiblephones.com/>

Computers for the Blind (CFTB) <http://www.computersfortheblind.net/>

[ZoomText](http://www.zoomtext.com/) magnification computer software

<https://www.zoomtext.com/> 800-444-4443

Video magnifiers: List of products and descriptions

<https://www.afb.org/blindness-and-low-vision/using-technology/assistive-technology-products/video-magnifiers>

National Organizations for Support, Information and Research Updates

American Diabetes Association <http://www.diabetes.org/> 800-342-2383

American Printing House for the Blind: www.aph.org 800-223-1839

American Foundation for the Blind: <http://www.afb.org/> 212-502-7633

American Macular Degeneration Foundation
<http://www.macular.org/> 888-622-8527

Association for Macular Diseases/Ophthalmic Edge
<https://ophthalmicedge.org/patient/about-us/>

Clinical trials

Search a database of privately and publicly funded clinical studies conducted around the world
<http://clinicaltrials.gov/>

Glaucoma Research Foundation
<http://www.glaucoma.org/> 800-826-6693

Hadley School for the Blind online courses
<http://www.hadley.edu/> 800-323-4238

Macular Degeneration Foundation <http://www.eyesight.org/> 888-633-3937

Macular Degeneration Partnership <http://www.amd.org/> 888-430-9898

Macular Degeneration Association
<https://macularhope.org/> 855-962-2852

Macular Degeneration Support Group List
<http://www.mdsupport.org/> (816) 588-7747

National Eye Health Education Program
<http://www.nei.nih.gov/nehep> (English and Spanish)

National Federation of the Blind
<https://www.nfb.org/> 410-659-9314 (toll call)

National Industries for the Blind
<https://www.nib.org/about/> 703-310-0500 (toll call)

National Institutes of Health database of privately and publicly funded clinical trials around the world <https://clinicaltrials.gov/>

Vision Aware[™] <http://www.visionaware.org/>

Vision Loss Rehabilitation Canada
<https://www.visionlossrehab.ca/> 1-844-887-8572

CNIB Foundation (Canada)
<https://cnib.ca/en/sight-loss-info?region=bc> 1-800-265-4127

Vision Rehabilitation Self-Help Materials

VisionAware™ Emotional Adjustment to Vision Loss
<https://www.visionaware.org/info/emotional-support/1>
from the American Printing House for the Blind

Fall prevention brochure, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): <http://www.cdc.gov/HomeandRecreationalSafety/Falls/index.html>

A Self-Help Guide to Nonvisual Skills (PDF), D. Roberts, 2011
<http://www.mdsupport.org/guide.pdf>

Making Life More Livable: Simple Adaptations for Living at Home After Vision Loss, M. Duffy, American Printing House for the Blind 800-223-1839
<https://www.aph.org/product/making-life-more-livable-simple-adaptations-for-living-at-home-after-vision-loss/>

Macular Degeneration: The Complete Guide to Saving and Maximizing Your Sight, L. Mogk, MD, & M. Mogk, PhD, NY: Ballantine Books 2003

The First Year — Age-Related Macular Degeneration, D. Roberts, NY: Da Capo Press, 2006

Overcoming Macular Degeneration: A Guide to Seeing Beyond the Clouds, Y. Solomon, MD, & J. Solomon, NY: BookSurge Publishing 2009

Pediatric and Youth Resources

FamilyConnect <http://www.familyconnect.org/>

CVIScotland for children with cerebral/cortical visual impairment and their families <https://cviscotland.org/>

Lighthouse Guild Support for Parents
<https://www.lighthouseguild.org/patients-families/tele-support-services/support-for-parents/> 800-562-6265

Perkins School for the Blind <https://www.perkins.org/>

Texas School for the Blind <https://www.tsbvi.edu/>

Camps and Organizations

Space Camp for Interested Visually Impaired Students
<http://www.scivis.org/index.htm>

U.S. Association of Blind Athletes <http://www.usaba.org/>

Veterans

Receive services and devices free of charge.

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

<https://www.rehab.va.gov/blindrehab/> 844-698-2311

Locate Vision Rehabilitation Services Near You

VisionAware™ <https://visionaware.org/>

Ask if services include:

A vision rehabilitation consultation by an MD or OD;
device recommendations; devices for loan; rehabilitation training for
reading, writing, shopping, cooking, lighting, glare control; home
assessment; mobility training; support groups.

Ask about cost:

Are services free, billed to insurance, other?
(Medicare covers most services, but not devices.)